Traders ask govt to fulfil market construction pledge

Ntungamo Municipal authorities urge the traders to be patient because plans are underway to construct a modern market in the next five years. The government promised to build a market 12 years ago.

BY PEREZ RUMANZI

Ntungamo Central Market Vendors are disappointed that the government has not fulfilled its promise to construct a new facility since 2014.

The vendors, who claim to have held meetings with the Ntungamo Municipal authorities over the construction of the market, said hope for a new market has faded as the government is not showing any signs of starting construction soon.

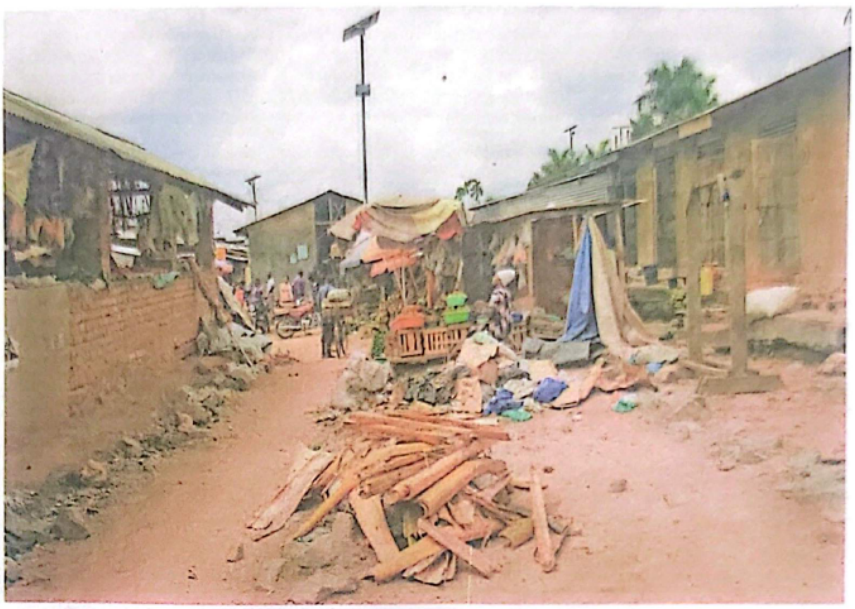
"Around 2014, we had several meetings, we were organised and asked to form an association for the vendors and stall owners for the market. We processed the title, and they promised that the government will help us reconstruct the market," Ms Jova Kasande, the treasurer of the Central Market Vendors Association, said on Monday.

She added: "The plan was to construct a four-storeyed market. We were to take the ground floor, while the Council was to occupy the second floor. Since 2014, we have not heard of any meeting in that regard."

Ms Kasande said vendors had entrusted the construction to the municipal authorities since they were the only link to the central government, but the officials have since gone mute.

"They told us we were to have a bigger market structure like those in Mbarara and Kabale. We were excited because it was the central government to construct it; we had much hope, but can we hope anymore?" she said.

The current market has leaking roofs, while vendors complain of inadequate space and mud during the rainy season.



Traders and customers inside Ntungamo Central Market, which locals say is in poor state and in dire need of repairs, in Ntungamo Municipality. PHOTO/PEREZ RUMANZI

The vendors accuse the municipal officials of failing to deliver on their promise, but are interested in collecting taxes from them.

Ms Costance Kyomukama, another vendor, said vendors have since vowed not to pay taxes to the municipal council until their conditions in the market are improved.

"I sell perishables on the stall. Some people rent lockups, but because of the situation inside the lockups being unfavourable, they have shifted their merchandise and put it outside. If conditions were favourable, we would be willing to pay taxes," shetold this publication on Monday.

Mr Abias Basigi, the Central Market Vendors Association chairperson, on Monday decried the sorry state of the market.

"We can't say we are working from the market, it is like we are having only a space called market, and markets are organised. Here, fish is mixed with groceries, meat is everywhere, and there is garbage and everyone tries to be innovative in their own way to sell. We can't regulate anything because of the sorry state and nature of the market," Mr Basigi said.

Shs2.8b ESTIMATED CONSTRUCTION COSTS

Municipal council speaks out

The Municipal Council Deputy Town Clerk, Mr Andrew Walabyeki, said the plan of constructing a modern market is still alive and hopes that the Uganda Support to Municipal Infrastructure Development (USMID) project phase II will support the construction.

"As a municipal council, we can't mobilise money to build such a big structure. It is in poor shape; we should have done something long ago. We are lucky that USMID has come in, and they are going to give us an advanced structure. We hope that in the next five years, vendors will have a better home," he told *Daily Monitor* on Monday.

Municipal Mayor Jacob Kafureka asked vendors to calm down and wait for the construction of a modern market. "We kept extending deadlines of construction, we have kept them waiting, but they must know this is not on our own. Vendors know that their taxes alone cannot construct the market; we must have more sources. We shall wait a little bit shorter for the project that has promised to have the market constructed," he said on Monday.

About the proposed market

The municipality had planned to construct the market at Shs2.8 billion.

There are currently about 300 vendors in the Ntungamo central market, who deal in different items.

Ntungamo Municipal Council collects between Shs15,000 and Shs50,000 every year per trading licence issued and at least Shs30,000 as rent for stalls and Shs80,000 for lockups monthly.

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NRM treasurer warns locals against land fragmentation

BY MUDANGHA KOLYANGHA

BUTEBO. The ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM) party's National Treasurer Barbara Nekesa Oundo has warned locals in Bukedi Sub-region against land fragmentation.

Ms Nekesa, while officiating as the chief guest at a thanksgiving ceremony organised by Butebo LC5 chairperson-elect Samuel Keddi, at Kanginima, yesterday observed that land fragmentation threatens the economic stability and long-term prosperity of households and communities.

"The trend of subdividing land into smaller parcels is often driven by the desire to share the inheritance among multiple heirs. This has also been compounded by the rapid sale of land, leaving many households with less than four acres. This is a serious time bomb that local leaders should take action to put on hold," she said.

Ms Nekesa added: "Very few families have two acres because the current average land holding is between one and a half to two acres. This definitely has a negative impact on both economic and food production."

She noted with great concern that most of the youth who after acquiring land, instead sell it to buy motorcycles.

"There should be a serious campaign against land fragmentation because this trend is likely to cause a serious crisis in the future. We should adopt the style of Indians because for them, land is taken as an investment," Ms Nekesa said.

She also asked Mr Keddi to focus on service delivery as the district chairperson.

"You have come to politics to give services not as a job because the people of Butebo elected you with their open hearts," Ms Nekesa stated.

At the event, Mr Keddi promised to promote and implement every government programme designed to uplift communities from poverty, among others.

"We will work tirelessly to ensure every citizen of Butebo feels the positive impact of this leadership" he said.

Mr Keddi added: "This is the power of our unity, and it is a humbling honour to be chosen in such a profound way. As we look to build a stronger Butebo and further the agenda of our party."

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